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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the attitudes and preferences of 38 intellectually gifted intermediate grade students toward their recreational reading habits. The students' parents also were surveyed to describe the children's reading readiness development. The results showed that the students preferred books over other materials, liked fiction more than nonfiction, and read mostly for enjoyment rather than for information. They frequented the public library most, compared to other media sources, and their hours spent reading varied. Almost all the children had read preprimer books prior to first grade, and most of the students attributed their learning to read to an early exposure to books and being read to by their parents. (RL)

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THE ATTITUDES AND PREFERENCES of THIRTY-EIGHT GIFTED INTERMEDIATE GRADE READERS TOWARD THEIR RECREATIONAL READING HABITS and A PROFILE OF THEIR PRE-SCHOOL READING READINESS

by

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To my parents for their encouragement and support throughout my education;

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ARTICLE ONE

THE STUDY

To give a fair chance for potential creativity to develop is a matter of life and death for any society. This is all important because the outstanding creative ability of a fairly small percentage of the population is mankind's ultimate capital asset, and the only one with which only man has been endowed (Toynbee 1968). In light of reality of this statement a question needs to be asked: Why is there a notable neglect of the gifted despite the recognition of the importance of gearing instruction to individual differences and the attempt to provide for the full range of their abilities? Historically, there has been a continuing, if minimal, amount of interest in the gifted child and his reading. Although notables such as Terman, Witty, Strang, and Barbe have written on this topic, William J. Tisdall (1964) concluded that the material on reading represented a total of approximately 1.35 percent of the total content of fifteen books on the gifted. In a later examination, Paul A. Witty (1977) revealed that of the voluminous literature on innovations there is almost a complete disregard of the role of reading for the gifted in most of the innovations discussed. The paucity of interest on the gifted and their reading is difficult to comprehend.

It must be realized that one of the greatest needs of the verbally gifted child involves the provision of individually appropriate reading experiences from the beginning of their school entrance. There should exist a quest to obtain the maximum amount of pertinent background information concerning a child's motivation toward reading readiness prior to entering school. Dolores Durkin (1961) found evidence that having an older sibling who likes to play school plays a role in early reading. More specifically, Eunice H. Price (1976) profiled early reading experiences of thirty-seven gifted children. Questionnaires were submitted to the parents examining pre-first grade reading readiness experiences including methods and places where learning took place. Parents of gifted pre-schoolers noted a persistent drive and almost a compulsion to learn at an early age. This better understanding of the nature of our gifted readers may lessen the chance that any reteaching will occur, thus avoiding boredom or regression of these eager and aggressive minds. Evidence is needed to encourage adults to put books in toy boxes and read to these children at an early age.

As educators we must be certain that our gifted youth are being provided with the best possible reading instruction and materials to nurture a love of learning that

guarantees their education will continue as long as there are good books to read! This is especially true in the intermediate grades (4, 5, 6) when the reader's experiences begin to focus on reading-to-learn. We educators should be cognizant of the gifted readers' degree of involvement with books. It is therefore logical to study their reading preferences and attitudes. This will enable educators to determine what the readers' specific interests are in order to assist in the selection of appropriate materials. Utilizing a questionnaire, Robert S. Langer (1970) learned that a majority of high achievers indicated a preference for library books and that 45% thought they should be utilized more in the classroom. Similarly, Mary Agnes Good McKay (1971) found that bright students employed a high selection rate for biographies, humor, and mysteries compared to below average achievers. Also, as the student became a better reader, interest in reading about school activities decreased while recreational reading increased. It, therefore, appears to be our responsibility to the child and society to fuel the minds of our future leaders.

In viewing recreational reading it should be acknowledged that reading for enjoyment is a legitimate feature of a gifted child's developmental reading program. In order

to achieve the mutual goals of educator and reader, a variety of printed materials must be made available to enable these children to experience a genuine satisfaction in the extension and enrichment of their interests. The voracious reading appetite of the gifted child makes it necessary for us to provide a wide range of materials in terms of a variety of subject matter recognizing special interests of the children. The findings of Ann W. Engin (1976) suggest that investigating the expressed reading attitudes of intermediate grade children constitutes a promising line of educational research. A consideration of some of the topics in which these students are interested might be capitalized upon by curriculum planners, teachers, and parents in purchasing materials.

Hypotheses

To provide school personnel with a generally clearer concept of pre-school readiness development of more able individuals as well as input concerning the voracious and sometimes perplexing reading habits of the gifted readers in question, a study was conducted utilizing the questionnaire method. The subjects, being fourth, fifth, and sixth grade boys and girls, and their parents, were surveyed to determine their attitudes and preferences toward their

recreational reading habits while their parents were surveyed tc provide a retrospective view into past reading readiness development of their children. The four hypotheses of the study were that:

1. there would be a difference in the number of children who learned to read using pre-primer level books before entering first grade than by other procedures or using other materials;
2. the major source of instruction would be discovered as stemming from the children's parents;
3. there would be no difference between the children in the number of hours spent reading recreationally;
4. there would be no difference between the children's preferences in types of reading matter they enjoy and will share common sources for the material.

The survey sought data in response to other questions; the resulting data will be discussed.

Also of related interest was early motivation toward reading by this group prior to school entrance. An attempt was made to learn what reading readiness skills were developed prior to first grade, what percentage of the sample

read pre-primer level books, and where and with what assistance were these skills achieved.

In obtaining information on the sample's attitudes related to print and those people in their proximal educational setting, it is hoped a better understanding of their needs will be achieved.

Sample and Procedure of Data Collection

In the autumn of 1979 a district committee screened a pool of students for placement in its Gifted and Talented Program. As a result, thirty-nine third, fourth and fifth grade students were chosen based on high intellectual, academic, and creative achievement. Use of past achievements, such as teacher comments, grades, and other standardized test information, helped facilitate the process. It should be noted that presently there are thirty-eight students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades who are the subjects of this study. Twenty-eight girls and ten boys compose this group which has a mean I.Q. of 130 as measured by the Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude.

To meet the purpose of this study a questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed by adapting scales of Engin, Wallbrown and Brown (1976); Lewis (1979); Van Nord (1972); and Heathington (1975) along with items formulated by the

researcher to survey the subjects' attitudes and preferences. The significance of this survey and the instrument itself was personally presented by the researcher to the subjects. Similarly, a questionnaire (Appendix B), modeled after an instrument constructed by Price (1976), was submitted via U.S. Mail to the parents of the subjects attached to a cover letter.

Definitions

Gifted Children as defined by the U.S. Office of Education are those. . .who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These. . .children. . .require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their (potential) contribution to self and society.

Educator is acknowledged as any person involved in attempting to foster another's latent capabilities.

Recreational Reading in this study relates to any type of material or matter which deviates from the child's school basal reader.

Readiness is defined by David P. Ausubel as the adequacy of existing capacity in relation to the demands of a given learning task. In simpler terms readiness related to read-

ing refers to a product of the child's maturation and environment which accommodates his capacities and interests.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the subjects of this survey were properly classified as gifted students and that all those participating in the survey provided the most accurate and sincere information to the best of their knowledge.

Limitations

This particular survey is limited in scope because its focus is on a small sample of students in a small suburban town and thus the results may not be generalizable to the general American population of gifted students.

Results

Hypotheses one and two.

To gain information concerning preschool experiences of this sample, questionnaires were submitted to the parents of the thirty-eight children. Thirty questionnaires (79 percent) were returned.

Table one reports the children's reading readiness experiences as indicated by parental response.

Table I

Gifted children's reading readiness experiences as reported by parents:

Activity	Age	No. of Children	Percentage*
Knew alphabet by sight	1 1/2 yrs.	4	13
	2 yrs.	2	7
	2 1/2 yrs.	1	3
	3 yrs.	3	10
	3 1/2 yrs.	6	20
	4 yrs.	12	40
	5 yrs.	2	7
Read sight words	2 yrs.	2	7
	2 1/2 yrs.	3	10
	3 yrs.	3	10
	3 1/2 yrs.	1	3
	4 yrs.	7	23
	4 1/2 yrs.	5	17
	5 yrs.	8	27
	5 1/2 yrs.	1	3
Read pre-primer level books	2 1/2 yrs.	3	10
	3 yrs.	4	13
	4 yrs.	6	20
	5 yrs.	10	33
	5 1/2 yrs.	5	17
	6 yrs.	2	7

*Rounded to whole numbers

All thirty children were noted as achieving mastery of alphabet recognition and reading sight words with some proficiency prior to entering first grade. Ninety-three percent experienced success with pre-primer level books prior to their sixth birthday and admission to first grade.

Twenty percent of the children could recognize and identify the alphabet by age two, while the mode was forty percent at age four. Greater than two-thirds or seventy percent read sight words before their fifth birthday. Twenty-three percent read pre-primer level books by age three and an additional one-third or thirty-three percent experienced success at age five.

Table two represents data about where the child learned to read and in the case of the home, how it was accomplished.

Table II

Where reading was learned as reported by parents

Place	No. of Children	Percentage*
At home		
Systematically taught	6	20
Learned incidentally*	9	30
Nursery School	0	0
Kindergarten	5	17
Combination of above three	8	27
First grade	2	7

*Merely by chance, without intention or direct teaching.

While fifty percent indicated that their child learned to read at home, sixty percent of that number did so incidentally. Another twenty-seven percent included the home together with kindergarten and/or nursery school as being responsible for teaching reading. Twenty-four percent postponed reading until school entrance, seventeen percent learned during kindergarten while only two children or seven percent learned in first grade. None of the respondents indicated that their child learned reading solely at nursery school.

Table three expands on how this sample began reading, with what or whose assistance.

Table III

How reading was begun as reported by parents

Initial Experience	No. of Children	Percentage
Parents read to child and T.V.	9	30
Parents read to child	7	23
Read on own and T.V.	3	10
Read road signs with parents' help	3	10
Flash cards and home library	2	7
Phonics and the family	1	3
Nursery school and T.V.	1	3
Kindergarten and T.V.	1	3
Kindergarten	1	3
First Grade	2	7

In fifty-three percent of the cases, parents reported reading to the child, seventy-three percent of the subjects were actively involved in the family circle in regards to reading introduction with sixty percent of the respondents indicating the child experienced contact with books. Only three children or ten percent were reported as initially being taught to read totally outside the home environment, that is, reading instruction was delayed until kindergarten or first grade.

Television, specifically "Sesame Street," "Electric Company" and "Password" played a significant role instilling reading interest. This media, however, wasn't solely responsible for reading acquisition, instead assumed a supplementary role as reported here by the parents.

Parental response was also sought to determine their attitude toward the amount of time their child currently spends reading.

At present, in your opinion, does your child read

	Number	Percent
too much	0	0%
enough	23	77%
not enough	7	23%

In six cases, respondents questioned if it was possible to ever read too much. Five of those who indicated "not enough" blamed television as a major diversion of their child's attention.

Hypotheses three, four and related data.

The subsequent findings are results of the children's questionnaires.

Table IV

Amount of time spent reading recreationally

Q. 23 How much time per week do you spend reading what you want? (Magazines, newspapers, books, etc.) Include the time you spend in school also.

	No. of Children	Percentage
less than one hour	2	5
one to four hours	18	47
four to seven hours	10	25
seven to ten hours	3	8
greater than ten hours	5	13

In terms of time spent reading recreationally, the mode was eighteen children or forty-seven percent reading one to four hours per week. Thirteen percent spent reading what they desired greater than ten hours per week while two subjects or five percent read less than one hour weekly.

Sixty-six percent of the subjects felt, in respect to Question 24 of the survey, that they had enough time to read what they wanted, while fourteen, or thirty-seven percent of the children indicated an insufficient amount of time available to read recreationally. Those not having sufficient time offered reasons:

Table V

Causes of insufficient reading time

Q. 25 Do you have too much/many

	No. of Children	Percentage
homework	13	38
T.V.	5	15
chores	4	12
clubs	2	6
music	0	0
sports	5	15
interference (noise)	5	15

Thirty-eight percent of the children blamed homework as the primary reason for their lack of time to read. Television, sports, noise interference and chores accounted for approximately another sixty percent of diversion from the children's free reading time.

Table VI

Reading Preferences

Q. 26 What do you like reading most?

	No. of Children	Percentage
books	26	68
magazines	5	13
newspapers	2	5
comics	5	13

Books were the most popular type of reading matter enjoyed by the subjects. Sixty-eight percent preferred books to thirteen percent for both magazines and comics. Only two or five percent enjoyed newspapers most.

In an attempt to determine types of books preferred, an analysis of fiction versus non-fiction reading was made as reported in Tables VII and VIII.

Table VII

Book Preferences: Fiction

Book Type	Like very much/like	Undecided	Dislike/dislike very much
adventure stories	84%	8%	11%
war	21%	18%	63%
animal stories	81%	13%	8%
science fiction	65%	22%	13%
mythology	52%	20%	29%
folktales	60%	22%	19%
hero/heroin tales	43%	37%	21%
stories about children	57%	22%	21%
stories about families	64%	22%	13%
stories of other lands	64%	27%	10%
sports fiction	59%	27%	10%
classics	33%	39%	29%
fantasy	77%	20%	3%
romance	26%	39%	35%
mystery	93%	3%	5%
humor	92%	8%	-

Humorous books were the most popular type fictional book chosen by the sample, ninety-two percent gave a positive response while none of the subjects indicated any dislike. Ninety-three percent expressed liking mysteries

and five percent were negative. Adventure stories were liked by eighty-four percent and eighty-one percent chose animal stories as favorable. Fantasy was liked by seventy-seven percent.

The most disliked type book was war stories; sixty-three percent casting an unfavorable response. Only twenty-one percent liked war stories, twenty-six percent liked romance, and thirty-three percent, the classics. In the case of classics and romance, thirty-nine percent were undecided about their liking or disliking while thirty-seven percent were unsure of hero/heroine tales.

Table VIII

Book Preferences: Non-Fiction

Book Type	Like very much/like	Undecided	Dislike/dislike very much
world problems	16%	34%	50%
social studies	21%	27%	52%
history	44%	22%	33%
archaeology	43%	16%	41%
prehistoric world	54%	30%	16%
pets	67%	20%	14%
nature study	50%	27%	24%
science	50%	22%	27%
religion	30%	27%	41%
biographies	54%	30%	19%
art	59%	25%	18%
music	61%	30%	10%
poetry	43%	20%	33%
travel	57%	22%	21%
sports	69%	18%	13%
crafts & hobbies	69%	16%	16%

Sports and crafts/hobbies were the most popular non-fiction books, being liked by sixty-nine percent. Sixty-seven percent enjoyed books about pets and sixty-one percent enjoyed music books. Fifty-nine percent enjoyed art books

and fifty-seven percent books about travel. Fifty-four percent indicated liking biographies and prehistoric world materials.

The subjects had a dislike for world problems, only sixteen percent enjoyed these books, fifty percent disliked them, and thirty-four percent of the sample were undecided. Fifty-two percent disliked social studies books and forty-one percent were negative toward religion and archaeology materials.

Table IX

Sources of reading material

Q. 27 Where do you get most of your favorite reading material? (1-most frequent place, 2-second, 3-third)

Source	Most Frequent	Second	Third
public library	27%	20%	13%
book club	22%	3%	11%
home library	18%	11%	-
school library	11%	27%	11%
book store	8%	8%	30%
gift	5%	8%	8%
friend	3%	5%	16%
classroom library	3%	11%	5%
grocery/convenience store	-	3%	3%
paperstand	-	3%	-

The public library was the most popular source of reading material; twenty-seven percent of the sample chose it as most frequently utilized. Book clubs were indicated by twenty-two percent as being most frequently utilized while eighteen percent obtained books from their home library most frequently. Twenty-seven percent chose the school library as the most frequently utilized second source. Twenty percent use the public library as their second most frequent source. Of the sample, thirty percent frequented bookstores as the most popular third source and sixteen percent borrowed from a friend. Paperstands and grocery/convenience stores were the least utilized sources of these children.

Table X

Q. 28 Do you belong to the public library?

Yes	89%	No	11%

Q. 29 If you answered "yes" to Number 6, how often do you go?

more than once a week	3%
once a week	27%
twice a month	20%
once a month	11%
a couple times a year	22%
never	3%

Thirty-four of the thirty-eight or eighty-nine percent of the sample belong to a public library. Of the four, or eleven percent, not belonging, three verbally declared they read other's books from the library or had adults obtain for them the books they desired. A mode of twenty-seven percent went to the library once a week. Sixty-one percent frequented the public library at least once a month, while three percent or one child went more than once a week and the same number never utilized this source.

Data, not specific to any hypothesis but also providing insight into the attitudes and needs of this sample is presented in Table XI.

Table XI

Related Findings

Qs.		+	?	-	(**)
1	I feel happy when I'm reading what I want.	96%	3%	0	
2	When I have free time at school, I usually read a book.	52%	25%	20%	
3	I seldom have a book in my room at home.	11%	13%	74%	
4	I check out books at the library but never find time to read them.	13%	16%	74%	
5	I wish I could have more books of my own.	56%	25%	16%	

Qs.		+	?	-	(**)
6	I would rather watch T.V. than read.	21%	39%	38%	
7	I would rather play after school than read.	31%	39%	28%	
8	I like the room to be quiet so I can read in my free time.	80%	11%	8%	
9	I read several books each week.	44%	30%	21%	
10	Things I learn about in school very often cause me to read about that subject on my own.	38%	22%	35%	
11	Most of the books I choose are not interesting.	10%	5%	83%	
12	I think reading is work.	8%	16%	73%	
13	I enjoy reading at home.	84%	13%	5%	
14	I enjoy going to the library.	61%	22%	14%	
15	Often I start books, but don't finish.	23%	20%	52%	
16	I think adventures in a book are more exciting than T.V.	47%	34%	16%	
17	It's a good idea to spend money to buy books and other things to read	58%	27%	13%	
18	Reading whatever I want to read teaches me many things.	67%	25%	5%	
19	Some time should be used for reading during summer vacation.	87%	11%	3%	
20	It's nice to get books or other things to read for gifts.	75%	22%	0	

Qs.		+	?	-	(**)
21	I enjoy reading, as a subject, in school.	43%	30%	23%	
22	I enjoy newspapers and magazines very much.	57%	27%	14%	

(**) (+) strongly agree/agree

(?) undecided

(-) disagree/strongly disagree

Almost all of the subjects, ninety-six percent, felt happy when they read something of their choice while sixty-seven percent of these felt it teaches them many things. Eighty-four percent enjoy reading at home with seventy-four percent usually having a book in their room. Fifty-two percent usually read when they have free time in school. Eighty percent like a quiet room in which to read. Seventy-three percent don't look upon reading as work and eighty-seven percent agree that some time should be spent reading during summer vacation.

Seventy-five percent thought books or other literature make good gifts and fifty-eight percent agree with spending money to buy reading materials.

In choosing between T.V. and reading thirty-nine percent couldn't decide. The same percentage couldn't decide between playing after school and reading. Forty-seven per-

cent felt adventures in a book were more exciting than those on T.V. while another thirty-four percent were unsure.

As a school subject, forty-three percent enjoyed reading, thirty percent were unsure, and twenty-three percent didn't like it.

When asked about the types of reading materials one would purchase, the responses were categorized in general groups.

Table XII

Q. 30 If you could buy the reading materials for your class or home library, what are some kinds of things you'd order?

various books	43%
books, maps, reference books	27%
periodicals	14%
paperbacks	11%
comics	8%

Forty-three percent specified specific book types which were personally appealing. The twenty-seven percent who desired books, maps, and reference material all commented, "To be used by all."

Conclusions and Implications

The first hypothesis, which stated that a difference would exist in the number of children who learned to read using pre-primer level books before entering first grade than by other procedures or using other materials, was supported by the data. Greater than ninety percent read pre-primers before entering first grade. That portion of the sample were already readers prior to the beginning of formal school reading instruction. The second hypothesis, related to the first, was also supported by the findings. It was stated that the major source of instruction would be discovered as stemming from the children's parents. More than half the parents read to their children and only ten percent credited the school with introducing reading concept.

It should be mentioned that nursery schools are non-existent in this community and providing the child was originally from this town, any contact with such a school would be minor.

In reading parental responses such as "I used to read to him before he was even able to understand what I was reading," "books were always available to the child and used for playtime even before reading habits began," and "We read to him every night or at least told a story,"

indicated that parents willingly accepted the responsibility for nurturing their child's reading interests. Eight of the thirty parents chose to mention that they never forced reading on their children. In most cases reported, the home environment was one of having books physically present, familial reading models, and sensible television viewing, often with an elder present to answer questions.

An analysis of the data indicates that there was a wide variance in the number of hours the children spent reading recreationally. This data disproved the third hypothesis, that there was no difference between the children in the number of hours spent reading in this manner. A range of responses between less than an hour to greater than ten hours was reported. The various responsibilities and/or desires of the fourteen subjects claiming insufficient time to read freely, appeared to have been a major factor in disproving the hypothesis being discussed. A number of underlying factors may have caused a variance in the amount of time spent reading recreationally. Eight percent liked the room to be quiet in order to read, as reported by question eight of the questionnaire. Question five revealed that more than half the subjects desired more books of their own. Some, prefer watching T.V. or playing after school to read-

ing and greater than one-third felt homework prevented them from reading freely.

This information may imply that recreational reading can increase if a child is provided with self selected material and a quiet location conducive to reading activity. Homework assignment objectives should be altered, realizing that these children require less practice with a skill than others in most cases. Five math problems, for example, done thoroughly will supply information of goal/skill mastery as well as an assignment to do thirty problems, and be less likely to cause boredom.

The fourth hypothesis, which stated that there will be no difference between the children's preferences in types of reading matter they will enjoy and will share common sources for the material, was not totally supported nor rejected. In terms of preferences, more than two-thirds or sixty-eight percent chose books. Of book preferences, fictional literature was more popular than non-fiction. Almost all, more than ninety percent of the sample, liked mystery and humorous literature. Fantasies, adventure stories, and animal stories along with humor and mysteries, being the most popular fiction, seemed to provide an entertainment quality and all of these types of books can be seen as types of material which

parallel closely types of popular television programming.

In the area of non-fiction, which in general was less liked, the area of civics was one which wasn't highly regarded for recreational reading. World problems, social studies, history, archaeology, and religion were rated as disliked or unsure of in greater than fifty percent of the cases. This cluster of book types is more complex and involved by their nature unlike the child-centered books (sports, hobbies/crafts, pets, art) which were enjoyed more.

Being exposed to books at an early age may have been a strong factor relating to the samples' preference in books. Being intermediate graders and having become more proficient and independent in reading skills, it's reasonable to assume self selection of books takes place. The survey indicated the subjects are currently reading for enjoyment and pleasure rather than for problem solving or for information in issue related literature. When children are allowed to read what they desire, individual interests blossom and in this group, caused some specific differences between the children and their preferences.

Common sources of reading material varied also although there were sources common to many. The most common source is in the school environment. School and classroom libra-

ries need to provide a wealth of opportunities and, as was indicated, fell below more distal sources in providing favorite reading material. Gifted children appear to need a process-oriented approach and a teacher/facilitator who encourages independent thought, selection, and judgment. A good classroom and school library are mainstays in any developmental reading program. Since more than half of the sample read in their spare time in school, more might have if there was something meaningful to select.

Book clubs which in many cases are directly related to the school were a popular source. These publications as well as the most popular source, the public library, can both successfully be used as an outgrowth of the school program and be related to classroom objectives.

In related areas the responses to the questions posed in Table XI demonstrated positive and encouraging responses in reading attitudes and habits. The subjects, in general, welcome books as gifts and would buy them themselves. Almost all agreed they are happy when reading what they want but only forty-three percent liked reading as a subject while over a half of the sample were undecided or disliked it. Thus, a large percentage should be reckoned with in some fashion so as to make the reading program more meaning-

ful to them. Over eighty percent enjoy reading at home and sixty percent enjoy the library. Free time to satisfy these aspirations should be provided to insure personal growth and development of future reading skills and habits.

ARTICLE TWO

RELATED LITERATURE

GIFTEDS' EARLY READING
and
ATTITUDES AND PREFERENCES

Research has indicated that many gifted children can read upon entering kindergarten and first grade. At this time opportunities should be given such children to use and develop their reading skills. The interests of gifted pupils must be employed to motivate reading. This can be accomplished by making accessible a wide assortment of individually preferred reading material so that the gifted pupil will continue to develop reading abilities and apply them widely.

In the field of reading there is a notable neglect of the gifted despite recognition of the fact they are an important asset to any society. According to Witty (1971), historically, there has been a continuing, if minimal, amount of interest in the gifted child and his reading. He pointed out that Terman early studied the reading of gifted children as did Witty himself, Strang and Barbe. Witty concluded that the paucity of interest in this area is difficult to understand.

Engin and others (1976) and Moray (1978) concur that there's a definite value in learning the reading interests of children as more educators need to capitalize upon interests to provide reading instruction as well as providing a wide variety of reading materials. Reading for enjoyment

is a legitimate feature of a gifted child's developmental reading program.

In studying the gifted intermediate reader's preferences in recreational reading, an interest in this samples preschool reading development was tapped. Terman (1926) reported that about half his subjects learned to read before starting first grade. About twenty percent of these learned to read before age five. Similarly, Price (1976), submitted questionnaires to parents of thirty-seven intermediate grade gifted students to gain information about preschool experiences of their children. Twenty-six percent were reading upon entrance to first grade. Seventy-three percent read sight words by age five and sixty percent read pre-primer level books by the same age. Twenty-four percent learned to read at home, thirty percent at private kindergarten or nursery school, and twenty-two percent from the combined efforts of the three sources above mentioned. The study suggests that parents of the gifted see their children as having persistent drive and compulsion to learn reading at an early age.

Witty (1971) stated that many gifted children learned to read before entering school in homes where the environment was rich in the essentials of early learning. Parents

encouraged firsthand experiences, by reading aloud to children, answering questions directly and patiently, and by providing a varied assortment of children's magazines, picture books, and other sources. He found that parents can help preschool children learn to read and added that their role is not complete upon entrance to school but becomes more significant in cooperating with teachers to promote developmental reading and interests.

Cappa and Schubert (1962) studied eighty-three gifted intermediate grade children and found approximately one-third began reading before starting school. Their personal libraries ranged from 2-500 books, an average of 20-100 books. Almost half of the sample received their own magazine subscription with Children's Digest, Boys Life, Jack and Jill, and Calling All Girls accounting for sixty-five percent of the total number received. The researchers reported that the school is frequently unable to provide free periods to satisfy the gifted child's insatiable desire to read. Most of their recreational reading, if it is going to take place, must occur in the home. Half of the sample reporting devoted more than one hour daily to free reading outside of school. Well over half of the sample are provided with a suitable reading environment at home such as a

bedroom or other conducive area. It was reported that the parents are assuming responsibility in extending the reading skills of their children and are interested in raising the quantity and quality of their child's reading.

Strang (1954) interviewed fifty-four junior high students, all of whom had I.Q.'s of 120 or higher and found that about half learned to read at age five or younger. Also, in retrospect, Kasdon (1958) studied reading backgrounds of fifty superior readers among college freshmen from nine institutions in metropolitan Los Angeles. Fifty-four percent knew how to read prior to grade one. Thirty-six percent were taught by a family member. Self motivation and family interests were the reasons given for early reading which began through curiosity toward signs and printed material. Fifty percent were interested in or curious about the contents of books. Only one child experienced difficulty in learning to read while three attributed their interest in reading to a teacher. Kasdon stresses a more systematic analysis should be made in schools to determine what portion of children have already begun to read when they enter first grade. Educators should recognize the importance of the family in children's early reading development. In conjunction, Malone (1974) stated clearly the need for true peer grouping and differentiated educational ex-

periences for gifted children as early as kindergarten to facilitate the beginning of successful learning outside the home.

The Kasdon (1958) and Strang (1954) research was retrospective in nature; no actual data was used to validate these recollections.

All the research thus far tends to support the belief that gifted children do read early. However, Cassidy and Vukelich (1980) in studying fifty-eight gifted preschoolers found that a relatively small percentage (17-23%) actually started to read before kindergarten. As part of their studies a three week summer institute was enacted prior to kindergarten, twenty-eight gifted students, both readers and non-readers took part. The children who failed to acquire significant reading ability at home, for the most part, did not make significant gains in the program. The readers were reported making great gains, enough in fact to make the overall gains of the group significant. Their instructional patterns in this program included discussion, LEA/phonics groups, learning centers, divergent or creative activities, and story time. A very surprising finding of this study is that young gifted children, even though seemingly possessing the measurable readiness skills and having high intelligence, do not necessarily learn to read quickly,

even when given instruction. A more thorough study of presumed early reading abilities of these children need be undertaken.

Durkin (1966) provided much data on the performance of early readers but these children were not necessarily intellectually talented. In her group, however, those who read early entered first grade with superior achievement and maintained their lead over a five year period.

In an article by Zimet (1966), she reported that Thorndike and Wolfson investigated the relationships between intelligence and interests. Both investigators reported no significant coefficients of correlation. Rather, maturity and age were seen as exerting a greater influence. It was reported that as the child matures, the rate of change in interest gradually diminishes. And the greater a child's maturity, the broader and deeper the range of interest of the reader becomes.

Relatively little research has been done on the relationships between attitudes toward reading and achievement in reading. In a study by Ransbury (1973) fifth and sixth grade children attributed their attitudes toward reading mainly to their ability to read. Results showed the respondents believing that parents greatly influence child's

reading attitudes while the teacher was not identified as an important factor in the child's formation of attitudes. It was suggested that the home provides the impetus to read, while the school provides the place where children learn to read.

Healy (1965) determined that attitudes of ten year olds were more positive when the children were allowed to choose reading groups according to their interests, indicating need for peer involvement. And also when they had the opportunity to select reading materials from a wide variety of matter.

It is felt by some educators that the higher a child's intellectual level the more positive the attitudes toward reading. The few research studies available in this area do not seem to support this position. A study of fourth graders by Hansen (1969) indicated that test intelligence wasn't a valid predictor of reading attitude. He studied the impact of home literacy environment on attitudes of reading. The sample included those from urban, suburban, and rural areas. Hansen focused on twenty-four students with most positive attitudes and the same amount with least positive. A highly correlated factor with positive attitudes was the role of the parent being involved with the child's reading activities. It was suggested that it wasn't

necessary for parents to be avid readers, but that their action in terms of personal or status characteristics is important.

It is believed that reading authorities feel that interests and attitudes are closely related. A study by Sauls (1971) attempted to determine whether a relationship existed between attitudes and recreational reading habits. Eight hundred sixty-five sixth graders were tested and, as a result, a significant relationship between pupil scores on an attitude scale and number of books read was achieved. The criterion measures were an attitude scale and number of books read during one semester recreationally.

Askov (1970) in conjunction with a teacher inservice training program investigated the effects of the Wisconsin Prototype System of Reading Skill Development on achievement and attitudes toward reading as a recreational activity. Second and third grade students were used. The assessment instrument was project constructed. At the end of one year she stated, "It can not be concluded that the experimental treatment was especially beneficial in terms of positive attitudes toward recreational reading for either a particular grade or achievement group." It was implied that more than a year is needed to significantly affect student variables such as attitudes.

The relationships between attitudes toward recreational reading and achievement, sex, and grade placement were investigated by Askov and Fishback (1973). The subjects were students in grades one and three. They utilized Askov's Primary Pupil Reading Attitude Inventory and the Paragraph Meaning and Word Reading subtests of the Stanford Achievement Tests. The test data indicated that attitudes were positively related to Paragraph Meaning subtest scores but not to the Word Reading subtest scores (with effects of sex, grade, and grade by sex interaction controlled). These researchers stated that because "the Paragraph Meaning subtest assesses the global reading process a favorable attitude toward recreational reading may indeed be associated with good readers who have few comprehension difficulties."

Utilizing a questionnaire distributed to two hundred sixty-four fourth and fifth grade pupils who were homogeneously grouped, Langer (1970) surveyed their reading interests and preferences. Children termed high achievers preferred library books above all others. Fifty-six percent would prefer a library book when given a choice of what to read. Forty-five percent of the same students believed these books should be used in the classroom. They indicated a desire for stories with some humor. It was believed that library

books were so popular because high achievers will read from almost any subject.

In a broad survey by McKay (1971) a high selection rate for biographies, humor, and mystery was employed by bright students compared to the below average achievers. Also, of interest was that, as students became better readers, their interests in reading about school activities decreased while recreational reading was increased.

Engin and others (1976) studied eight hundred fifty-three intermediate grade students in Franklin County, Ohio Public Schools. In the area of "Reading as Enjoyment" where students pursued reading for fun, almost seventy percent felt reading was one of the most interesting things done at home. Sixty percent thought books were good gifts for them, fifty-five percent read during free time in class while about the same number read during the summer. Almost half desired more personally owned books. The researchers added that information of this type should prove useful to curriculum planners, evaluators, and educational guidance.

Clifford (1972) cautions that a gifted child usually becomes interested and sometimes engrossed in a particular field, often a specific type of fiction. Educators need use caution not to place value judgments or interfere in their

selection of recreational reading. He found that gifted children who are curious will read non-fiction prior to fourth grade. Folktales and mythology become desirable during the fourth grade while in fifth, biographies and drama are annexed to the folktale. By grade six there is a greater urgency to provide students with free time which is non structured so that they may individualize their own study of literature. At times, fiction such as Nancy Drew stories may not meet with adult approval. It must remain in the educators conscious that the child's interest and need for these books often serves as a foundation for later studies of literature. It may be suggested that trade books become the basal!

Ashley (1970) and Rudman (1958) in separate studies both found children's preferences in grades four to seven being similar. They ranked mysteries first and adventure stories second. Ashley's group ranked ghost stories and comics closely for third most popular while Rudman's identified children and pets. Also, in Ashley's sample, fifty-five percent disliked love stories and forty-two percent found poetry distasteful. Rudman found an increased interest in mystery, sports, and animal stories as the readers got older. He also stated that action and adventure determined the popularity of stories.

A study by Schulte of recreational reading interests of intermediate grade children in four states, one from each major geographical region of the United States, was discussed by Weintraub and others (1972). Of over six and a half thousand opinions, no difference in preferences was attributed to geographic location. The major interest was fiction although the percentage decreased as the child approached sixth grade.

Lewis Terman (1926) found that the average gifted child by age nine has almost attained the maximum as to number of books read while reading over a considerably wider range than the control group. The gifted read more science, history, biography, travel, folktales, informational fiction, poetry, and drama. In proportion to the total number of books read, the gifted read fewer on adventure or mystery and far less emotional fiction.

Moray (1978) suggests that an effective reading program in grades four to six, teachers must provide a wide variety of attractive reading materials. Included should be newspapers, paperbacks, and magazines. Perhaps if these children are provided more time to read recreationally subjects of high interest, they would read more often.

George Norvell (1950) stated that Thorndike found that the pattern of reported reading interests of bright children (median I.Q. 123) are most like a group of mentally slower children two or three years older than the gifted. The literary value of books preferred by these two groups are practically equal. Norvell (1958) studying intermediate children concluded there was evidence which justified the belief that superior children like poems of nature and of didacticism less than all other children. Equally enjoyed were myths, legends, adventure, patriotism, humor (except limericks), and animals. Nonsense verses were least liked by the brighter children. The bright demonstrated strong preference for myths, legends, humor, and wild animals. Poems studied in school were rated low. When self selection was available, bright children read more and enjoyed reading more than children in general. Documented here is the fact that a large part of the literary material presented in school is not suitable from the standpoint of children's interests.

In a study of gifted seventh-eleventh grade students in a special school, Van Nord (1972) found that sixty-five percent or more didn't report a strong interest in areas of social studies, Black Studies, or contemporary problems. The girls at all levels always rated a larger percent of

fictional subjects above the nonfiction. The boys showed the same preference for fiction, this was especially true of both sexes at the seventh grade level where fiction books were most deisred. In examining their preference for types of library books, the sample's interests may have been influenced by the special school environment; once they removed to mix with the general population, interests may change as the force of others is felt.

Two notable studies of related interest occurred over fifty years ago, the oldest was by Elizabeth Cleveland (1921). She studied two hundred twenty-two gifted and one hundred seventy-six control students. Forty-three percent of the gifted preferred superior reading, such as history and finest fiction while only nine percent enjoyed inferior books such as dime store novels like Polyanna. The percents were reversed for the control group. Both groups enjoyed average books of ordinary modern novels the same.

In 1932 Johnson conducted a study in Duluth, Minnesota, to determine the amount of time fifth through eleventh grade children read newspapers and magazines. Of three hundred forty-two boys responding, a median of 149 minutes per week was spent reading magazines. The four hundred eighteen girls spent 64 minutes. The girls read a median of 29 minutes per day in newspapers while the boys 36 minutes.

In terms of book preferences, ninety percent of twenty books chosen by both sexes were fiction.

An interest approach to reading was employed in the Major Work Program in special classes for the gifted in elementary schools in Cleveland, Ohio. Barbe and Norris (1963) report that most of the reading is "collateral", where self selection of materials takes place. The readers' objectives are to obtain information and enjoyment. Jacobs (1963) states that books giving correct, up to date facts, and precise technical information should be at the disposal of the gifted. They shouldn't be confined to readings at their grade level. They require and deserve extension of library facilities and resources to the end that the, continue to read in their specialties for pleasure, knowing, and inspiration. Book collections need be widely diversified in content, authorship, levels of difficulty and type or genre. Witty (1963) in continuing, suggests interest inventories and anecdotal records can aid the educator in understanding pupils' attitudes, problems, and preferences. When they have an opportunity to read materials of interest to them, they turn joyfully to reading for information and recreation.

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1. I feel happy when I'm reading what I want.
2. When I have free time at school, I usually read a book.
3. I seldom have a book in my room at home.
4. I check out books at the library but never find time to read them.
5. I wish I could have more books of my own.
6. I would rather watch T.V. than read
7. I would rather play after school than read.
8. I like the room to be quiet so I can read in my free time.
9. I read several books each week.
10. Things I learn about in school very often cause me to read about that subject on my own.
11. Most of the books I choose are not interesting.
12. I think reading is work.
13. I enjoy reading at home.
14. I enjoy going to the library.
15. Often I start books, but don't finish.
16. I think that adventures in a book are more exciting than T.V.
17. It is a good idea to spend money to buy books and other things to read.
18. Reading whatever I want to read teaches me many things.
19. Some time should be used for reading during summer vacation.
20. It's nice to get books or other things to read for gifts.

21. I enjoy reading, as a subject, in school.

22. I enjoy newspapers and magazines very much.

Answer Sheet

	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					

23. How much time per week do you spend reading what you want? (Magazines, newspapers, books, etc.) Include the time you spend in school also.

less than one hour _____ four - seven hours _____

one - four hours _____ seven - ten hours _____

greater than ten hours _____

24. Do you have enough time to read what you want?

_____ Yes _____ No

25. If you said "yes" to Number 24, go on to Question 26; if "no", do you have too much/many

_____ homework _____ clubs

_____ T.V. _____ music

_____ chores _____ sports

_____ interference (noise)

26. What do you like reading most?

_____ books _____ newspapers

_____ magazines _____ comics

a. Do you receive any magazines regularly through the mail?

_____ Yes _____ No

How many _____

27. Where do you get most of your favorite reading material? (1-for most frequent place; 2-second; 3-third)

_____ book club
_____ book store
_____ friend
_____ gift
_____ home library
_____ school library
_____ public library
_____ classroom library
_____ paper stand
_____ grocery or convenience store

28. Do you belong to the public library?

_____ yes _____ no

29. If you answered "yes" to Number 6, how often do you go?

_____ more than once a week
_____ once a week
_____ twice a month
_____ once a month
_____ couple times a year
_____ never

30. If you could buy the reading materials for your class or home library, what are some kinds of things you'd order?

_____

_____

_____

	like very much	like	undecided	dislike	dislike very much
world problems (nonfiction)					
adventure stories					
war					
social studies					
history					
archeology					
prehistoric world					
animal stories					
pets (nonfiction)					
nature study					
science					
science fiction					
religion					
mythology					
folktales					
hero tales					
biographies					
stories about children					
stories about families					
art					
music					
poetry					
travel					
stories of other lands					
sports fiction					
sports nonfiction					
crafts and hobbies					
classics					
hobbies					
fantasy					
romance					
mystery					
humor					

1. At what age did your child know the alphabet by sight? (That is, could recognize or identify all the letters.)

   _____

2. At what age did he/she read isolated words? Example: "stop", "dog" _____

3. When did he/she read books with only a few different words repeated many times?

   _____

4. Where was reading learned?

   a) at home
      systematically taught _____
      learned incidentally _____

   b) kindergarten _____

   c) nursery school _____

   d) combination of the three above _____

   e) first grade _____

5. Please explain, if possible, how your child began reading. You may wish to include with whose assistance or what material this was aided.

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. At present, in your opinion, does your child read

   too much _____ enough _____ not enough _____